

# **Maryland Transportation Authority**

## **Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group**

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, January 6, 2016

**MDTA Bay Bridge Administration Building**

### **Members Present**

Jack Broderick, Chairman  
Barbara Hitchings  
Nick Deoudes  
Nancy Wright  
Tracy Schultz  
Pat Lynch

### **MDTA Staff**

Kerry Brandt  
Tim Cooke  
Michele Gross  
Gordon Garrettson  
Jeff Roberta (consultant – RK&K)  
Will Pines  
Dennis Simpson

### **Other Attendees**

Bob Rager (SHA)  
Hilary Gonzales (SHA)  
Steve McCoy (Sandy Point State Park)

### **Call to Order and Welcome**

Chairman Jack Broderick called the meeting of the Bay Bridge Reconstruction Advisory Group (BBRAG) to order at 6:06 pm. Introductions were made by all in attendance.

### **Amendments**

In regards to the September 2015 generator issue, the minutes should now state that the wait for the generator was two to three hours and not all day.

## **Operations**

Mr. Garrettson provided traffic statistics since the last meeting. There was a 2.5% increase in traffic, though Saturday traffic was down while Friday remained consistent. There were also increases on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

Thanksgiving saw an increase over 2014 but was around the 2011-2012 volumes.

Mr. Garrettson also spoke about the October 23<sup>rd</sup> incident where a box truck overturned. At 8:06 am traffic was held and released at 9:37 am with the backup clearing fairly quickly. The 10K was also a big success (21,015 runners) with all lanes being restored at 12:15 pm.

## **Construction**

Phase IV painting has a Notice to Proceed (NTP) in April 2016. Cable wrapping and dehumidification is almost finished with just punch list items left. Lane signal modifications have an NTP of December 15, 2015. Truck weigh station is being replaced beginning in January 2016 with an anticipated completion date of June 2016.

### **SHA construction:**

- Steel from Lancaster PA will be using the US 301/MD 213 route beginning January 19 for project east of MD 331
- Hauling of concrete barrier using the US 301/MD 213 route beginning later this year for the same project east MD 331
- Paving on US 50 at St. Margaret's Road will be complete by July 1
- Paving on US 50 from Old Baltimore Road to Busch's Frontage Road will begin July 1
- Paving on US 50 approaching the Severn River Bridge will need to have detours for the exit ramps
- Drainage improvements along US 50 from MD 665 to the Severn River Bridge beginning October 2016
- Setting piles for the Severn River Bridge beginning in January 2016
- MD 404 project
  - Expedited design build project
  - Proposals due March 2016
  - NTP Memorial Day with estimated completion date of Thanksgiving 2017
  - Safety improvements
- Reconstruction of bridge decks along US 301 towards Delaware will begin late spring 2016
- Severn River Bridge
  - Project is fully funded
  - Advertised date is Spring 2017
  - Adding an additional lane eastbound
  - Lane width will be reduced during construction

- Timeline is Labor Day 2017 through Memorial Day 2018

## **Sandy Point Discussion**

Ms. Hitchings discussed issues of traffic backing up on East College Parkway due to the Park becoming overcrowded on weekends. The Park Service representatives acknowledged the increase on non-holiday weekends. There was discussion about using cones to keep traffic flowing and also about the entrance to the park not being able to handle the current volume. Ms. Hitchings said Skidmore and White Hall are not as affected but Sandy Point has also seen an increase in visitors. SHA and MDTA have agreed to meet with Maryland Park Service to discuss possible solutions. Ms. Lynch said the Cape St. Claire Improvement Association has been calling police to have cars towed.

## **Bay Bridge Life Cycle Cost Analysis Presentation**

Jeff Roberta presented the MDTA's findings from the December 2015 report.

### *Issues and Concerns Raised*

- Mr. Deoudes stated that the MDTA must find out the life of the current structure.
- Ms. Lynch asked if Rock Hall was run through NEPA and do we have to go through an analysis like this again?
- Mr. Broderick said the assumption is that backups will still occur and no alternate routes will be used
- Question asked about counters on the Bay Bridge. Mr. Garrettson said they are used on westbound (but not for traffic analysis) and have 100% accurate measures on eastbound due to the toll booths and E-ZPass data
- Question asked about peak traffic in this study. Mr. Simpson responded by saying the peak period is Memorial Day to Labor Day
- Mr. Deoudes asked if the MDTA studied where people are going while using the Bay Bridge. Ocean City? Other destinations? He stated that if Bay Bridge traffic is going to Delaware, maybe the MDTA should look at another area to build the new bridge. Mr. Simpson responded that origin-destination studies were not performed as part of the life cycle study.
- Ms. Lynch thought it was interesting that eastbound was okay structurally but not westbound. Mr. Pines responded that the MDTA alternates between eastbound and westbound for system preservation projects.
- Mr. Deoudes asked a question about adding a lane in Option 4
- Mr. Broderick said that the Kent Narrows drawbridge was added but didn't help solve the overarching traffic problem.
- Question was asked if Options 1, 2, and 3 included the widening of roads prior to the Severn River bridge? Mr. Roberta responded that the study included expanding US 50 to 4 lanes in each direction from the Rowe Boulevard to the Bridge and from the Bridge to the US 50/301 split.

- Mr. Broderick asked if nothing new happens until 2035, what is next step?
- Ms. Lynch says she was told by Senator Astle that the new bridge would be where the current one exists. Can Eastern Shore counties reject that proposal? Mr. Simpson responded that there is an existing statute under which the majority of eastern shore counties need to approve new bridge location.
- Ms. Lynch said NEPA is essential and that MDTA is already late in starting the process. She was told funding won't be made available until final cost of the bridge is determined. Mr. Simpson responded that NEPA approval is contingent on having funding in place for the next project phase, which in this case would be Engineering or Right-Of-Way Acquisition.
- Question about the expiration date for the end of NEPA to funding. Mr. Simpson clarified that it could happen but with qualifiers.
- Mr. Broderick stated the need to start NEPA study. Mr. Simpson stated that the Purpose and Need would lead to the alternatives that are studied.
- Ms. Lynch asked how long for the Purpose and Need and alternatives? Mr. Simpson answered there is not a specific timeline for these efforts.
- Mr. Broderick asked if Governor and legislature wanted to move funds, would NEPA study have to include previous studies. Mr. Simpson responded that previous studies would be considered as part of the NEPA effort.
- Mr. Deoudes asked about when a decision would be for a possible new location. Mr. Simpson responded that decision would be the final outcome of the NEPA study. It is likely a NEPA study of this magnitude would take 6-10 years to complete.
- Mr. Schulz asked what NEPA involves and stated that sometimes environmental issues can be used to stop projects like this.
- Ms. Lynch asked four questions on behalf of Mr. Nevel (who was not in attendance).
  - o Asked for a motion to submit written comment by mid-February on the study. Mr. Broderick asked about the need to have this turn around so quickly.
  - o Is a least expensive option a new bridge in Southern Maryland? Mr. Simpson responded that would not solve issues at Bay Bridge.
  - o Would MDTA take the lead in NEPA? Mr. Simpson responded that decision has not been made and would most likely be a joint SHA-MDTA study.
  - o What is next step? Mr. Simpson said MDTA is evaluating study results to see what is next and to maintain the current structure.
- Mr. Broderick asked if the MDTA has done briefings for legislature? Mr. Simpson responded no. Since this meeting, MDTA has briefed the Eastern Shore Delegation and the Anne Arundel County Delegation and is scheduled to brief the Queen Anne's County Commissioners.
- Discussion turned to what can be done by this group to help move the process along. Political decisions, Governor support or non-support, and possibility of having elected officials attend a future BBRAG meeting were all discussed.
- Mr. Deoudes asked what it would take financially to build the bridge? Mr. Simpson said tolls from across the state and likely other federal and state funds. Mr. Simpson stated that the current issue at the Bay Bridge is still

- largely a summer/weekend problem. Mr. Simpson said he is not trying to diminish the impact but wanted to be clear.
- The group decided that they would all reach out to elected officials to try to get support during the current legislative session and that meetings with elected officials would need to begin soon.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:23 pm.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Tim Cooke  
Project Manager for Community Relations